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Peking's policy toward Angola continues to reflect Chinese efforts to capitalize on Moscow's heavy-handed support for the Popular Movement. Publicly, the Chinese are maintaining a position of strict neutrality, and there is no evidence that any significant new amounts of Chinese military assistance are reaching the National Front or National Union.

The South Africans reported that a Chinese vessel transferred cargo to trawlers off the Angolan coast nearly a month ago, indicating that Peking was making good on an earlier promise to provide some arms to the National Union. No similar deliveries have been reported since. The Chinese may also have given tacit approval to Zairian President Mobutu to divert to northern Angola small amounts of military equipment provided to Zaïre under China's formal military assistance program--so long as Peking is left with a plausible case for denying direct involvement in Angola.

As long as other countries maintain their current levels of assistance to the National Front and the National Union, China can be expected to maintain a low profile with its former clients, endorse the Organization of African Unity's call for neutrality toward Angola, and score propaganda points at Moscow's expense. Peking is clearly concerned, however, that it may not be able to sustain this approach.

Any significant reduction in support for the National Front and National Union by other countries, for example, would present the Chinese with difficult decisions. Mobutu would almost certainly want to divert to Angola large amounts of the Chinese assistance to his country to make up for the loss of other sources, and such increased Chinese involvement would not go undetected for long. Peking would be forced either to give Mobutu free rein and risk major damage to its international image or to maintain restrictions on the use of Chinese equipment and chance not only a major strain in Sino-Zairian relations but also a default to the Soviets in the rivalry for influence in Angola.

The prospect of a reversal of the Organization of African Unity's position on Angola or an agreement among its members to go their separate ways on the recognition issue would be equally unsettling to the Chinese. This would almost certainly lead to much wider African and Third World recognition for the Popular Movement and leave Peking on the wrong side of the fence. Such valued friends as Tanzania, Mozambique, Romania, and Yugoslavia have already followed Moscow's lead in formally recognizing the Popular Movement.

The Movement, for its part, has carefully avoided closing the door on Peking. A senior official of the Movement has specifically stated that his group has resisted

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Soviet pressures to side with Moscow in the ideological dispute with China. There are no signs, however, that Peking is seriously considering switching its political position. On the contrary, the expanded Soviet and Cuban role can only have darkened China's views of the Movement. [REDACTED]

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